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NEWS RELEASE

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Record Number of Courthouses Transfer to State Governance

Transfers Pave the Way for Urgent Courthouse Repairs and Rebuilding

San Francisco—Making major strides in improving California courthouses, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) today announced it has completed courthouse transfer agreements for 466 facilities in the state out of more than 500, as of December 31, 2008.

The transfer of court facilities will pave the way for urgently needed repair and rebuilding of California courthouses under the Trial Court Facilities Act of 2002, landmark legislation that shifted the governance of courthouses from the counties to the state.

“This is a major achievement that marks significant progress in ensuring safe, secure, and accessible courthouses for all Californians who do business in our courts,” stated Chief Justice Ronald M. George, chair of the Judicial Council, the policymaking body of the California courts.

“Over the past several years, the judicial branch has evaluated the condition of courthouses throughout the state, completed master plans for the 58 counties, and assessed the most immediate needs for repair and construction of courthouses,” stated William C. Vickrey, Administrative Director of the Courts. “With these transfers, the judicial branch is now well-positioned to begin immediate work that will save the state money and stimulate the economy of many counties. Transfers allow the AOC to move forward with the 41 most immediate and critical construction projects approved by the Judicial Council.”

These 41 projects were first identified in master plans completed in 2002–2003 and prioritized in the Trial Court Capital-Outlay Plan last adopted by the council in October 2008.

(more)

Transfer of a courthouse from county to state responsibility allows the AOC to proceed with funded major capital projects—such as replacement with new construction, major renovation, or renovation and expansion—and with funded projects for minor improvements such as replacing existing building systems, repairing exteriors, replacing roofs, and completing limited interior remodeling.

Sixty-four court facility transfers in 15 California counties remain to be completed. The majority of the remaining facilities are expected to be transferred by March 31, 2009, and all transfers should be completed before the December 31, 2009, statutory deadline.

“We could not have reached this milestone without the tremendous assistance of Assembly Member Dave Jones [Sacramento], who authored the legislation permitting transfers to occur after June 30, 2007, and who worked diligently to ensure the transfers were progressing,” Mr. Vickrey stated.

In October 2008, the Judicial Council approved a list of 41 court construction projects funded by Senate Bill 1407, newly-enacted legislation that creates enhanced revenue funding for state court facilities. Tackling these 41 projects, in 34 counties, will allow the judicial branch to address the most urgently needed courthouse improvements in the state.

With these and other projects now underway, major court construction projects will take place in 48 out of 58 California counties in the next decade.

SB 1407 sets the framework for issuing up to \$5 billion in revenue bonds that will support the construction and renovation of courthouses. The measure will not require any additional money from the state’s strained General Fund, nor will it reduce the funds available to support other state services. Instead, it will rely on a series of increases to fees, assessments, and penalties imposed on court users to support urgently needed courthouse capital improvements and repairs.

Securing responsibility for state courthouses is one of three historic reforms that the Judicial Council has accomplished in the past decade. The others include state trial court funding and trial court unification. A list of court facilities transferred to state governance by December 31, 2008, appears on the California Courts Web site at http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/documents/transfers_to_date.pdf . More information on the AOC’s Office of Court Construction and Management is at <http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/programs/occm/> .

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The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and

accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.